

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
Chairman
House Committee on Finance
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903



Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH
Director

Department of Health
Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711
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RE: H 6122 - AN ACT MAKING APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2022 – ARTICLE 15 (HEALTHCARE REFORM)

Dear Chairman Abney:

I am writing in support of H 6122, an act making appropriations for the support of the state for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022 – Article 15 (Healthcare Reform). This article amends several chapters of the General Laws for the state to join five interstate healthcare professional compacts to allow reciprocity and expedited licensure for the following professions: nurses, physicians, emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, physical therapists, and psychologists.

An interstate compact is a contract between two or more states. It carries the force of statutory law and allows states to perform a certain action, observe a certain standard, or cooperate in a critical policy area. Generally speaking, interstate compacts:

- Establish a formal, legal relationship among states to address common problems or promote a common agenda;
- Create independent, multistate governmental authorities (such as commissions) that can address issues more effectively than a State agency acting independently, or when no state has the authority.

Compacts allow healthcare professionals to have one multistate license with the ability to practice in their home state and in other compact states. Compacts increase access to care while maintaining public protection at the state level. Under a compact, healthcare professionals can practice in other compact states without having to obtain additional licenses.

The mission of compacts is to increase access to healthcare for patients in underserved or rural areas and allow them to more easily connect with medical experts through the use of telehealth technologies. While making it easier for healthcare professionals to obtain licenses to practice in multiple states, a Compact strengthens public protection by enhancing the ability of states to share investigative and disciplinary information.

The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact (IMLC) offers a voluntary, expedited pathway to licensure for qualified physicians who wish to practice in multiple states. Under this agreement, licensed physicians can qualify to practice medicine across state lines, within the Compact, if they meet the agreed-upon eligibility requirements. Twenty-five states are currently members of the IMLC. In New England, Maine and New Hampshire are IMLC states.

With respect to the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), currently, 32 states, including New Hampshire and Maine, participate in the NLC. Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) are not included in the NLC.

The EMS Compact has now been enacted by legislation in 19 states. The EMS Compact allows qualified EMS personnel to work across state borders, within their scope of practice, on a short-term, intermittent basis. In New England, New Hampshire is an EMS compact state

The Physical Therapy Compact is an agreement between member states to improve access to physical therapy services for the public by increasing the mobility of eligible physical therapy providers to work in multiple states. Twenty-one states are physical therapy compact states, including New Hampshire.

Fourteen states are participating in the Psychologist Compact. In New England, New Hampshire is a psychologist compact state.

The enactment of this legislation would allow Rhode Island to increase access to health care by increasing the pool of qualified health professionals available in the state and allow Rhode Island health care professionals in the state to practice out of state more easily and affordably both in person and through telehealth services.

The compact would also decrease the amount of licensure costs that must be paid by professionals practicing in multiple states. The legislation would also streamline the administrative work RIDOH has to do when processing large numbers of licenses, especially in times of a staffing shortage like the one we experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I encourage your favorable consideration of this important public health legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Alexander-Scott", followed by the word "for" in a smaller, cursive script.

Nicole Alexander-Scott, MD, MPH
Director of Health

CC: The Honorable Members of the House Committee on Finance
Nicole McCarty, Esquire, Chief Legal Counsel to the Speaker of the House